

STIRRING SCOTTISH FOOTBALL TALE TO-DAY.

The Boys' Realm 1910

THE GREAT SATURDAY SPORTS PAPER



"SCOTLAND'S PRIDE!" A STIRRING TALE OF FOOTBALL IN THE NORTH

The Cads' Match



A SPLENDID,
COMPLETE TALE
OF
JACK NOBLE
AND
PELHAM SCHOOL.

THE 1st CHAPTER. Noble and Russell Play in a Strange Match.

"WHAT do you say, old son? Things getting a bit slow? They always do about this time. No matches to speak of, and even the dear Cliffy's got the hump. Fact is, we've scored off him so often that he's getting a bit cautious." The speaker was Bob Russell. He and Jack Noble had just come out of morning school, and had met in the Third Form-room to make plans for the day.

"No reason why we should slack, Bob," rejoined Jack. "Let's go for a good tramp before dinner."

"Right-ho! I'm your man! What a ripping morning! Let's go through the village. I want a new cap, and I can get it on the way. Afterwards we'll take a swing round by the Elsham road. Just make a three-mile turn."

Bob did not waste much time in the purchase of his cap, and by a quarter-past twelve he and Jack were clear of the village, and swinging along the hard, dry, dusty road at a round pace.

Presently, from behind a hedge, they heard shouts and the unmistakable thud of a football being kicked.

"Hallo, what have we struck?" exclaimed Jack. "This isn't the townies' ground."

"There's a gate just ahead," said Bob. "Let's have a squint."

The two raced for the gate. Jack got there first.

a muddy face and his shirt torn halfway down the back.

At this moment Redhead caught sight of Jack, and his sharp face lit up as he spotted the Pelham cap.

"I say, you can tell 'em I'm right," he cried. "They won't believe me when I tell 'em they've got no right to handle the ball."

"Of course you're right!" said Jack decisively. "By Soccer rules no one may handle the ball except the goalkeepers. I expect you chaps have got mixed between Soccer and Rugger."

"That's it. Some of them have watched the soldiers playing Rugby over at Elsham," replied Redhead. "Now, then, you chaps, start over again. We'll have a fresh kick-off. Line up there!"

"Wait a jiff," said Jack. "You've got your fellows all wrong. You only want five forwards, then three half-backs, two full-backs, and your goalkeeper. Shall I show you?"

"It would be most awfully good of you," said Redhead, who, in spite of his rough get-up, seemed to Jack to speak a deal better than the rest. "Fact is," he went on apologetically, "there's not a single one of them knows a thing about the game, and I've only just started it myself. If you'd give us a hint or two we'd really be awfully grateful."

There was something bright and cheery about the little red-headed fellow that took Jack's fancy wonderfully. And it struck him as particularly plucky that such a youngster—he could not be more than thirteen, and was small for his age—should have managed to collect two complete teams of village boys and inspire them with his own enthusiasm. He turned to Bob.

"Look here, Bob, why shouldn't we play with 'em a bit? If one goes each side we can put 'em in the way of the rules, anyhow."

"Oh, do!" cried Redhead, in an ecstasy. The others, who, impressed by the Pelham caps, had stopped their wrangling, now bashfully added their entreaties, so Jack and Bob pulled off their coats and waistcoats, tied handkerchiefs tightly round their waists, and set to work.

Work it was, too. First they had to choose their forwards and backs, and try to induce them to remain in their proper places, a task which was all the more difficult because they did not know the names of a single one of them. Redhead, however, whose real name, he told them, was Joe Deighton, seconded them ably. He was a regular little bantam, not afraid of any of them, and he pushed and shoved into places boys who were much bigger than he.

At last Jack and Bob got them sorted out, and the game began—such a game as neither of the Pelham boys had ever played before. They had to pull someone up every minute for some flagrant breach of rules, and at the end of half an hour they were both, in spite of their hard condition, dripping and breathless.

"It's one o'clock," said Jack suddenly. "We must make tracks, Bob, or we shall be late for dinner. I don't want to give old Slaney a chance of lining us."

"But you'll come again?" begged Joe Deighton.

"Do! Please do!" cried others of the boys.

"All right!" said Jack. "We'll come tomorrow at the same time. Will that do?"

"Fine!" declared Joe. "And, I say, we're awfully obliged to you! You've helped us along no end!"

"I like that red-headed chap," declared Jack, as they hurried back towards the school.

"He's a little ripper!" agreed Bob. "Fancy the cheek of him, tackling all those young louts!"

"He seems a bit ahead of the rest of 'em," suggested Jack.

"Yes, in a way. Speaks better, and all that. But he was in just the same rough rig, and I suppose he goes to the National school with the rest of 'em."

"Dare say he does, and no doubt Clifford & Co. would call him a cad, and think it beneath their precious dignity to play with him, but I don't care. I'm going to help him all I can. Not bad exercise, either, eh, Bob?"

"Exercise!" grinned Bob. "My word, I've played many a match and felt it less! And as for my shins, they're raw. How those young barbarians do hack!"

THE 2nd CHAPTER. Trouble for Clifford.

It was a slack time for matches, so Jack Noble and Bob Russell had plenty of leisure to fulfil their promise made to young Deighton.

Almost every morning they trotted off down the Elsham Road and acted as coaches to the village boys. As a matter of fact, they both enjoyed it. Deighton kept his rapsallions up to a most extraordinary pitch of keenness, and often there were thirty boys or more on the ground, all clamouring to play.

Once Jack and Bob got the hang of their names their task became a little easier, but, all the same, it was no child's play. Some of these village boys were bigger and stronger than themselves, and rough was no word for their play. They would get so wildly excited that there was no holding them, and the hacking at times was terrific.

More than once Jack had to forcibly remonstrate with some offender. Once he ordered a boy off the field. The fellow, a biggish lout called Eldridge, refused to go. Jack sailed in and gave him a taste of his fists, and Eldridge fled, howling.

But the incident caused no ill-feeling—rather the reverse. The village boys seemed to think all the more of Jack because he could box a bit. They obeyed his orders willingly, and every day showed an improvement in their style of play.

As for young Deighton, he was in the seventh heaven of delight.

He was a born footballer, and keen as mustard. Jack found that it was he who had been responsible for the whole thing. He had begged the use of the field from a neighbouring landowner, had got up a subscription to buy the ball, and, single-handed, had tackled the formidable task of teaching football to a score of boys who had hardly ever seen a game in their lives.

The more Jack saw of the youngster the better he liked him. There was not a grain of snobbishness about Jack, and it never occurred to him to think the worse of his new friend because his clothes were shabby and his boots hobnailed.

Others were not so kind. One morning when the usual practice was over, and Jack and Bob had put on their coats, and were walking towards the gate of the field accompanied by young Deighton, who was asking some questions about the off-side rules, they heard a nasty, jeering laugh, and, looking up, saw Clifford, accompanied by his bosom friend, Marker, leaning over the gate.

"Ha," remarked Clifford, as the three came up, "now we know all about it! Here we behold the Third Form aristocrats in the midst of their chosen companions. Playing games with the village schoolboys. Just what one might have expected—eh, Marker?"

"Just exactly," chimed in Marker sneeringly. "I say, Clifford, I wonder what the school will think of this? Really, it's a bit thick to find Pelham boys chumming up with street arabs!"

"It's a beastly disgrace—that's what it is! But dirt always sinks to its own level. I'm not astonished at finding Third Form kids mixing 'emselves up with a parcel of cads."

Jack and Bob knew by long experience that nothing annoyed Clifford more than the silent scorn treatment. They never even glanced at the Second Eleven champions, did not appear to recognise their existence.

Not so young Deighton.

He had all the hot temper which goes with red hair, and before either of the others could give him a word of warning, or check him in any way, had bounded forward and confronted the two Shell boys with blazing eyes and crimson cheeks.

"Were you speaking of me?" he demanded fiercely.

"What is it, Marker?" asked Clifford pityingly.

"I asked you if you were referring to me when you talked of 'a parcel of cads'?" cried Deighton.

"If the cap fits, wear it by all means," returned Clifford, unable to restrain his spite.

Next moment he got a most unpleasant and unexpected surprise, in the shape of a crack on the jaw from a small but uncommonly hard fist.

"Now, am I a cad?" blazed Joe Deighton. Clifford, enraged beyond words, was over the gate in a twinkling, and rushed on the boy, with the plain intention of pulverising him. He aimed a blow at Deighton which would have knocked his teeth down his throat if it had reached its mark; but little Deighton side-stepped with remarkable coolness, and as Clifford plunged past him, let him have a couple of rattlers—one on the chin, the other on the neck.

Then several things happened all at once. Marker came scrambling over the gate to his friend's assistance, but was stopped by Jack and Bob, while nearly a score of the village boys, who had not yet left the ground, came running hard to take their captain's part.

"Here's a nice mix up!" was the thought that flashed through Jack's mind. "Clifford'll half kill that kid, then Joe's pals will pulverise Clifford, and goodness knows what'll happen when we get back to the school!"

Fortunately, Jack's gloomy forebodings were not altogether justified. Clifford, seeing the throng charging down upon him, and having no stomach for facing such odds, abandoned his design of making mincemeat of Deighton, and, shouting to Marker to come on, spun round, vaulted the gate, and was off, hot-foot,

up the road. In spite of Jack's efforts to prevent them, about half the village boys tore away in pursuit, their hobnails clattering along the hard, dry road.

"Come on, Bob!" cried Jack. "We've got to catch 'em up before they reach the school—or there'll be the mischief to pay!"

Joe Deighton shouted something, but the Third Form boys did not wait to listen. They were off and away as hard as they could sprint.

It was very soon plain that Clifford and Marker had the legs of their pursuers, for Jack and Bob passed most of them in the first few hundred yards. But that the two Shell Form boys had got a regular scare there was no doubt whatever, for they cut across the village by a back street, and never slackened speed until they were within a few hundred yards of the school.

When Jack at last caught them up, Clifford swung round on him like an angry snake.

"By thunder, Noble, I'll teach you what it means to set a pack of cads on Pelham boys! I'll make the place too hot to hold you! Even your own pals'll turn on you when they hear what I've got to tell them!"

Jack kept his temper.

"What about your own, when I tell 'em you and Marker ran a mile from eight or ten little kids about as high as your elbow? What about that, Clifford?"

This point of view had plainly not occurred to Clifford, and it staggered him. But he was too angry to accept it.

"Eight or ten, you young brute! There were a score of them, and some as big as you!"

"Russell and I can tell better than that," returned Jack coolly. "And what price your trying to hammer a kid half your size, and getting the worst of it, as you did? You won't hide those bruises on your jaw very easily. I tell you, Clifford, that you won't exactly shine if Russell and I tell all we know."

"I don't care a hang!" retorted Clifford viciously. "You see what your precious pals will think of you when they hear what I've got to say!"

"All right. Say what you like. Russell and I can stand the racket, if you can. Anyhow, our records are a bit cleaner than yours."

Clifford fairly foamed at the mouth. He was far too furious to listen to reason. For a moment Jack thought he would go for him right there in the open road. It was Marker who interfered.

"You dry up, Cliff!" he said. "Look here, Noble, I think, like Clifford, that you and Russell are rotten to go and play footer with a lot of village cads. But we sha'n't say anything if you don't."

"All right," replied Jack curtly. And as Marker seized Clifford by the arm and fairly towed him on towards the school, Jack and Bob broke into a run again, and were back in their class-room before the Shell Formers had even reached the gates.

"Now, to spike their guns, Bob!" cried Jack.

"How d'ye mean?" asked Bob, rather puzzled.

"Simple as mud. Tell some of our chaps about Deighton's team, and take a couple down with us to-morrow. Then, if the festive Cliffy does break his word, and go and blab, he'll be flummoxed."

"Ah, I see! He'll be thinking we've kept it all dark?"

"Of course! And when he finds we haven't, he'll be sold!"

"Who shall we tell?"

"Oh, Valence and Taffy Evans! They're not snobs. They won't be above playing with anyone who's keen on footer."

"Shouldn't have much use for them if they were!" growled Bob. "For that matter, I don't believe any of our team are that sort."

The door swung open, and in rushed one of the very boys they were speaking of—the cheery Valence. Jack called to him, and as he had fully anticipated, Valence was much interested, and declared himself delighted to come down with them the next morning and help train the Deighton crowd.

Evans, when approached, was equally pleased, and on the following morning the school contingent which hurried down the Elsham Road numbered four instead of two. As they left the village, Bob came close to Jack Noble.

"Jack," he whispered, "did you see Cliffy? He and Marker were watching us from the tuckshop window."

THE 3rd CHAPTER. The Match Against the Village Boys.

"SAY, Noble, will you do me a big favour?"

"Why, of course I will, if I can!" replied Jack, with a surprised look at Joe Deighton's eager, freckled face.

"I hardly like to ask it," went on Deighton. "Some of your chaps may not care about it. You'll be sure and tell me if they don't, won't you?"

"What are you beating about the bush for?" laughed Jack. "Out with your terrible request, whatever it is!"

"Well," stammered Deighton, "we wondered if you'd mind bringing a team down from the school to play us? You told me yesterday that we'd got quite a decent eleven now, and that we ought to get some matches. You've no idea how it would buck these fellows up if you'd bring some fellows to play against them. Of course, we're only a rough crowd, and we don't run to flannels, and the ground's

